

## Lightening Up - Using Hu-mour

We've all heard laughter is the best medicine and in many situations, this is true. Laughter relieves stress and tension, lifts mood, enhances creativity and boosts energy. Best of all, laughter plays an essential role in building strong, healthy relationships by bringing people closer together, resolving conflicts, enhancing resilience, improving mood, easing anxiety and fear, creating intimacy, promoting group bonding and adding joy and zest to life! What terrific reasons for ensuring humour and laughter are alive and well in your family life.

Have you considered how much humour and playful communication you are using with your young and/or adolescent children? Using humour and being playful can go a long way to strengthening your relationships, as positive feelings are triggered and emotional connection is fostered. This bond then acts as a strong buffer against stress, disagreements, and disappointment. If you are not using humour and laughter in your interactions with your children, there is a risk that family life could feel pressured, not fun, hard work, overwhelming, even boring to a degree.

Is your family one which groans loudly at "dad" jokes or one where mum or dad laugh at themselves or see the lighter side of something serious? Incorporating humour and play into your daily interactions can improve the quality of your relationships with your child/ren as well as your connections with partner, colleagues, other family and friends. Humour and laughter in relationships allows you to be more spontaneous, let go of defensiveness, release inhibitions and express true feelings and it can interrupt a power struggle.

Easier said than done, we can hear you say! Parenting can induce quite a lot of fear...What will my child be like as a teen?, How do I keep him/her safe from harm?, Will we have done enough for our children? Am I a good enough role model? and there are SO many more big questions we parents ask ourselves on a fairly consistent basis.

It's difficult to lighten up when there is so much riding on parenting well. Here is a checklist for some questions to ask yourself when faced with something problematic:

- Is it really worth getting upset over this?
- How important is it?
- Is it worth upsetting others?
- Is it really my problem?

What are the techniques to use to solve this problem so that each person emerges from it in a positive way?

See the humorous side of a difficulty - there might be a lighter way to view it. Help your children find the positive out of something seemingly negative.

You might be saying to yourself, "I don't have a strongly developed sense of humour", "I'm fairly serious", "I'm not funny" but don't let these beliefs stop you creating 'inside the family' jokes, sharing a joke you have read or heard or engaging in 'playing the fool' sometimes.

Here are some more ideas:

- Watch a funny movie or TV show
- Seek out funny people
- Share a good joke or a funny story often
- Dance around to happy music
- Sing playfully in the shower
- Check out your bookstore's/library's comedy section

- Read comic strips together
- Host game night with friends
- Play with a pet
- Go to a “laughter yoga” class
- Goof around with children
- Do something silly
- Continue to tickle your kids while they enjoy it
- Make time for fun activities (e.g. bowling, miniature golfing, karaoke, bush adventures)
- Be playful

In the words of George Bernard Shaw, ‘We don’t stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing.’ Playing can boost your energy and vitality and even improve your resistance to disease, helping you feel your best.

Two things to be aware of:

1. Humour between parent and child should be equally fun and enjoyable for both people. If your child doesn’t think your joking, tickling or teasing is funny— stop immediately. Before you start playing around, take a moment to consider your motives, as well as your child’s state of mind and their sense of humour. Also teach your child that a joke is funny for both/all people involved and not an opportunity to belittle, make fun of others, a time to be sarcastic, or laugh at someone else’s expense. When the joking is one-sided rather than mutual, it undermines trust and goodwill and can damage the relationship.

2. There are times when humour is not healthy and that’s when it is used to cover up emotions. Don’t cover up the truth by using a joke as this can create confusion and mistrust in relationships and it is hugely beneficial to use an “I feel... or “I felt” statements to communicate emotions.

Four websites as a starting point:

<http://www.funny-games.biz/jokes/children-jokes.html>

<http://www.broadcaster.org.uk/section2/jokes/parentingjokes.html>

[http://www.theholidayspot.com/parents\\_day/jokes\\_for\\_parents\\_day.htm](http://www.theholidayspot.com/parents_day/jokes_for_parents_day.htm)

<http://www.harrythec clown.com/jokes.html>

Thought we should finish with a couple of jokes:

A. I used to be in a band, we were called ‘Lost Dog’. You probably saw our posters.

B. One day a mailman was greeted by a boy and a huge dog. The mailman said to the boy, ‘Does your dog bite?’

"No," replied the boy. Just then the huge dog bit the mailman.

The man yelled, I thought your dog doesn't bite!’

‘He doesn't,’ replied the boy, ‘that's not my dog!’

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